(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

King's Assassination Etched In Witnesses' Eyes, Ears

By ROBERT SAMSOT

"He didn't say a word; he didn't move, said The Rev. Andrew Young, executive vice president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

"It sounded like a firecracker."

The shot, he said, hit Dr. Martin Luther King in the neck and lower right part of his face. His eyes appeared first half-closed and then open but staring before a Fire Department ambulance took him to St. Joseph Hospital.

The Rev. James Bevel, one of Dr. King's closest aides, said after the ambulance left, "I think he's gone."

"I heard the ping and looked around and he was lying on his back," said Chauncey Eskridge, one of Dr. King's legal advisers.

"When I looked up, the police and sheriff's deputies were running all around. The bullet exploded in his face," said The Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, who was with Dr. King on the balcony of the hotel.

"He had just bent over. If he had been standing up, he wouldn't have been hit in the face. When I turned around, I saw police coming from everywhere. They said, 'Where did it come from' and I said, 'Behind you.' The police were coming from where the shot came."

He said, "It was similar to the Kennedy incident (the assassination of President John Kennedy). The police were all around, but there is no military protection against ambush and he was ambushed.

On South Main, where the building in which the sniper may have hid squats in disrepair, Guy W. Canipe, part owner of Canipe Amusement Co., 424 South Main, said a gun was dropped next to the front door of his store.

"I didn't think anything about it, I just thought . . . (a man seen running) had dropped something and I went out to tell him. I just heard the sound of it falling."

Mr. Canipe described the man, whom he saw only from the rear, as "clean, nicely dressed, wearing a dark suit (and bareheaded). Not like the kind of people you see down here," he said.

He estimated the man's age between 20 and 30. "It's hard to tell from the back.

"Just a couple of minutes, it seemed like, a deputy came down the street from the same direction the man came from and he had a gun in his hand. I saw him with that pistol and went back inside. I didn't want to get in trouble."

Two men were inside Canipe's store when the shooting took place.

Bernell Finley, 40, and Julius Graham, 22, of 804 North Fifth, said they heard a thump outside.

"I just heard this thing and looked out the window and there was that gun in the box just sitting there. When I looked up, I saw this young man laying rubber down the street," Mr. Finley said.

A stoneyfaced patrolman stood outside the door of Canipe's store. A Negro, he just shook his head when asked what happened.

A police detective, also a Negro, said, "Son of a bitch. You remember when they shot Meredith, I'm afraid they're going to just take this town apart."

When someone mentioned black power, he said, "It isn't just black power, it's gonna be everybody — from all over the damn country."

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☐ Being Investigated

The Rev. Mr. Jackson said Dr. King had been in his second-floor room — No. 306 — throughout the day until just about 6 p.m. He emerged, wearing a black suit and white shirt, paused, leaned over the green iron railing and started chatting with the Rev. Mr. Jackson, who introduced him to Ben Branch, a musician who was to play at a rally Dr. King was to address two hours later.

Dr. King asked if Branch would play a spiritual at the night meeting. Then Solomon Jones Jr. of 374 Vance, Dr. King's chauffeur, said he told Dr. King he should put his top coat on as he prepared to leave the motel and Dr. King said, "OK, I will," then the bullet struck. It was 6:05 p.m. Dr. King was pronounced dead at St. Joseph at 7 p.m.

After the shot, Jones said he saw a man with "something white on his face" creep from a thicket across the street.

At 6:19 p.m. police cars at the scene were radioed Dr. King was in "critical" condition.

And less than 45 minutes later a grim faced patrolman said, "He's dead." "Oh my God," said another. "There goes all hell."